WA Beef Council

Building a world-class competitive beef supply chain in Western Australia

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets

Unfortunately there has been inadequate time to finalise a detailed response since the Western Australian Beef Council (the Council) became aware of the call for public submissions (13/07/11). The Council would appreciate an opportunity to provide additional input and feedback to this review and wish to register our interest in speaking to a senate hearing if held in WA. As a provisional measure the Council has provided the response below.

The Western Australian Beef Council (the Council) was convened by Minister Redman in 2010. The Council was formed in response to recommendations from the independent WA Beef Stocktake Report. The Council is comprised of a group of highly skilled industry leaders from each sector of the supply chain that are committed to working together for the betterment of the WA beef industry.

The Council focuses on a number of key areas which include improving communication across the supply chain and the development of new and existing markets for WA beef and livestock. From these perspectives the Council makes the following points for consideration as part of the Senate Inquiry on animal welfare standards in Australia's live export markets:

- The Council supports existing industry organisations including Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) in their efforts to raise standards and awareness of improved animal welfare outcomes in all export market sectors. However, the Council recognises the difficulty that industry faces in apportioning levy funds and activity across the spectrum of research, development and extension and the obvious need for this market intervention to improve animal welfare outcomes.

- In conjunction with MLA the Council is modelling individual market segments of the WA beef industry. This work is developing an understanding of the impacts of individual markets for WA cattle products. It is clear that the live export industry in WA is significant both directly in terms of live export revenue and the flow on impacts to other market sectors.

- The Council believes that it is critical that Government finalises a considered set of live export standards that include animal welfare requirements both pre-embarkation and post-embarkation and that these are, transparent and effectively communicated to all sectors of the livestock industries. This

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includes the effective communication of these responsibilities between different industry sectors which should lead to widespread compliance.

- The reviewed standards should involve the application of quality system principles. These principles will ensure processes that are verifiable, have 3rd party assurance and provide traceability. The process will include a closed supply chain that should underpin the sustainability of the trade. This in turn should provide government with a defensible system that meets our 'social licence' requirements.

- It should be noted that the WA northern beef industry has evolved to meet the requirements of the Indonesian live trade. The genetics have been selected to focus on this market and that this poses a significant challenge in disposal of cattle into other markets. The synergies in the Indonesian supply chain for northern producers strengthen this focus and change will be difficult in the short and medium term.

- Currently the WA beef industry will need to find alternative marketing options for cattle that will be displaced from the live export trade in the current season. Any future changes to the volumes of livestock exported will have similar effects and consideration needs to be given to the flow on effect this has to other market sectors within the state.

Please address all correspondence to Dr Kirsty Thomson at the address listed below.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Hiscock
CHAIRMAN